

DigitHer

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Date of creation

2023

Description

DigitHer is an initiative aimed at increasing the participation of young women in the tech industry by providing them with the skills and support needed to launch digital careers. Developed with the support of the Digital Republic Fund, a division of the Italian Government's Department for Digital Transformation, the project targets 150 unemployed women aged 18 to 34, enrolling them in specialised training programmes for Java Developer and Data Engineering roles.

A key challenge that DigitHer seeks to address is the lower application and completion rates of women in tech programmes, often due to self-doubt or the perception that they are not qualified enough. To tackle this, Generation designed female-only cohorts to create a more inclusive and encouraging learning environment.

The mobilisation of learners was strengthened through strategic partnerships with Valore D, an Italian association promoting gender equality in the workplace, Freeda, a media platform dedicated to female empowerment, and the Omnicom PR Group. Together, these partners played a crucial role in outreach, awareness, and engagement efforts, ensuring that young women felt motivated and supported throughout the process. The project successfully launched six cohorts, equipping participants with technical expertise and career opportunities, ultimately contributing to a more diverse and equitable digital workforce.

Beneficiaries

 **Discouraged and disengaged young people**

Unemployed women aged 18-34

Countries

 **Italy**

Education level and sector

 **Adult education**

Tech sector

Level of implementation / Scope



National level

2023-2025

Aims of policy/initiative

The DigitHer initiative was designed to address the gender gap in the tech industry by equipping young women with the skills and confidence needed to launch digital careers. Women remain underrepresented in technical professions, often facing barriers such as self-doubt, limited access to targeted training, and a lack of role models in the sector. DigitHer directly tackles these challenges by providing a fully funded, intensive, and inclusive training programme tailored for women aged 18 to 34.

The initiative aimed to enrol 150 women in specialised training for two in-demand tech roles: Data Engineer and Java Developer. The 14-week, full-time online courses combined technical instruction with behavioural, attitudinal, and soft skills training, ensuring that participants were not only job-ready but also empowered to navigate the digital sector with confidence. The programme also included career support and mentorship, culminating in at least one guaranteed job interview with Generation and Valore D partner companies.

Through targeted outreach, an inclusive learning environment, and direct connections to employment opportunities, DigitHer has created a clear and accessible pathway for women to build successful careers in technology.

Features and types of activities implemented

The DigitHer initiative was designed not only to provide women with in-demand technical skills but also to ensure they had the confidence, mentorship, and career support needed to successfully transition into the digital workforce. The programme combined technical training, soft skills development, mentorship, and a strategic mobilisation strategy to effectively engage and support these learners in launching their careers in tech.

Technical and soft skills training

DigitHer's 14-week, full-time online courses equipped participants with both technical and behavioural skills required to succeed as Data Engineers and Java Developers. The training covers:

- Technical skills: Programming, database management, cloud computing, data structures, and algorithm development.
- Soft skills: Problem-solving, teamwork, adaptability, and resilience, ensuring participants are not only technically competent but also prepared for workplace dynamics.
- Career readiness: Personalised coaching on job interviews, CV writing, and professional communication

Mentorship and community building

Learners benefited from the Generation Italy mentorship programme which covers social support, employability coaching, and job placement support. In addition, recognising the importance of role models and mentorship, DigitHer introduced 'Inspiring Talks', a series of interactive sessions where learners engaged with female professionals from Valore D's network. These sessions foster motivation, career guidance, and networking opportunities, helping participants envision themselves in digital careers.

Strategic mobilisation and outreach

To reach and enrol 150 women, Generation Italy implemented a targeted mobilisation strategy, ensuring an equitable selection. Key mobilisation activities included:

- Branded programme identity: The creation of a recognisable name and logo (DigitHer) increased visibility and engagement.
- Clear and inclusive messaging: Tailored communication across various channels encouraged participation by addressing potential learners' concerns and misconceptions.
- Strategic partnerships: Collaborations with local NGOs, such as Valore D and Freeda, were crucial in reaching vulnerable women, as these organisations had strong community connections.
- Paid digital campaigns: Social media and digital advertising proved to be the most effective way to attract potential learners.
- Equitable applicant experience: A recruitment and selection process focused on fair opportunities for all candidates, ensuring that no one was left behind due to self-doubt or lack of access.

Target group

The DigitHer initiative serves as a model for stakeholders looking to engage and support female NEETs in digital careers. It is particularly relevant for:

- VET providers seeking to develop short, intensive training programmes tailored to NEETs, ensuring accessibility and employability.
- Employment agencies and social enterprises aiming to bridge the gender gap in tech by providing structured training to employment pathways.
- NGOs and community organisations supporting women facing barriers to employment, such as those with family responsibilities or lacking confidence in their qualifications.
- Government bodies and policymakers designing inclusive workforce development policies and digital skilling programmes for underrepresented groups.
- Companies and industry partners looking to diversify their talent pipeline by collaborating on targeted recruitment, mentorship, and job placement opportunities.

Resources

A total of EUR 516,137 granted by the Italian Digital Republic Fund, part of the Department for Digital Transformation.

Evaluation of the measure

The DigitHer initiative has been evaluated based on key performance indicators (KPIs) and outcomes, demonstrating its impact and effectiveness in supporting women into digital careers.

Main Findings:

- Exceeded enrolment target: 174 learners enrolled across six cohorts, surpassing the initial goal of 150.
- Strong graduation rate: Of the enrolled learners, 150 successfully completed the programme.
- Placement: The programme successfully placed 108 participants in digital roles, meeting the 100% placement goal.
- Nationwide reach: The programme engaged participants from 17 regions across

Italy, ensuring broad accessibility.

- High demand: The programme received 2,378 applications, indicating strong interest among women in digital careers.
- Selective admission process:

Java Developer: 1,201 applications → 280 selected for interviews (23%)

Data Engineering: 1,177 applications → 300 selected for interviews (25%)

Evidence of effectiveness of the measure

The DigitHer initiative has had a significant impact on empowering female NEETs by providing them with the skills, confidence, and opportunities needed to enter the tech sector. Key outcomes include:

- Breaking barriers to tech training as well as to employment: By creating female-only cohorts, providing mentorship, and fostering a supportive learning environment, DigitHer helped participants overcome self-doubt and societal biases that often discourage women from pursuing tech careers.
- High engagement and interest: The 2,378 applications received highlight the strong demand for accessible digital training opportunities tailored to women.
- Pathways to employment: With 108 graduates already placed in jobs and others undergoing interviews, DigitHer has successfully connected learners to real career opportunities.
- Nationwide inclusion: By reaching 17 regions across Italy, the programme ensured broad accessibility, especially for women in underserved areas.
- Increased confidence and digital competence: The combination of technical skills training, soft skills development, and career coaching empowered participants to confidently enter and navigate the digital workforce.

These results highlight DigitHer's success in mobilising women into the tech sector, proving that targeted recruitment, mentorship, and gender-inclusive training environments can effectively address barriers to entry and create meaningful career pathways for female NEETs.

Success factors

The DigitHer initiative stands out for several key innovative elements that contributed to its success and differentiates it from other similar programmes:

- Targeted female-only cohorts: The decision to create female-only cohorts was aimed at providing a supportive and inclusive environment that encouraged women to enter the tech industry, where they are typically underrepresented. This helped to combat the gender bias and self-doubt many participants experience, making the training process more accessible and engaging for women.
- Strategic mobilisation and outreach: One of the most innovative aspects of DigitHer was its mobilisation strategy, which successfully reached a broad and diverse group of women. Key elements included:
 1. Branded programme identity
 2. Inclusive messaging
 3. Partnerships with local NGOs
 4. Paid digital campaigns for targeted reach
- Comprehensive support for learners: Beyond technical training, the programme integrated mentorship, including the 'Inspiring Talks' series with female STEM role models. This approach helped foster motivation and career confidence, encouraging participants to pursue digital careers and equipping them with the soft

skills and support necessary for career progression.

- Flexible, accessible, and free of charge online training: The free of charge and fully online, flexible format of the training allowed learners to balance their education with other commitments, such as family or part-time work. This accessibility was key to attracting young women who might not have otherwise been able to participate in traditional in-person training programmes.

Contact details for further information

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Related intervention approaches



Helping female NEETs (re)integrate into education, employment or training



Outreach



Easing transitions into work



Offering mentorship programmes to NEETs



Flexible and permeable education and training systems



Skills development

Source URL: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/en/tools/neets/resources/digither>